

Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories
Metis Association of the Northwest Territories

Statement of evidence of
MEYER BROWNSTONE and ROGER ROLFE
before the
MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE INQUIRY
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For OXFAM-Canada one of the most critical aspects of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline is its socio-economic impact on the North. The issues raised by this aspect of the Inquiry are vital to Northerners. But as well they pose real development alternatives that are increasingly relevant to all Canadians.

OXFAM-Canada has been active during the past ten years working with people in the Third World through long term development projects which have confronted some of the immediate injustices of poverty in their daily lives. Through this direct experience in the problems of development/underdevelopment over a number of years, a perspective for OXFAM-Canada has emerged which has shaped our goals and programme in developing nations and in Canada. We are convinced that this experience is directly relevant to the broader issues now before the Inquiry. We welcome this opportunity to outline some of the dimensions of our experience in the Third World and to detail our work in Canada with the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories. They form the basis for the conclusions that we will draw for the Inquiry.

A more complete understanding of our perspectives on development and underdevelopment has emerged in OXFAM-Canada only after several years of intensive review of our practical experience in international relief work and long-term development projects. As an active participant in the international OXFAM movement, we have had available to us a wealth of international experience gained over three decades. Our project work in the Third World has been supported by the expertise of a network of field-staff deployed by OXFAM and located in various countries and regions in Latin America, Asia and Africa. The field workers have had a direct insight into the particular dimensions of poverty and underdevelopment in particular regions. Their reports as well as OXFAM-Canada's communications with the project holders

themselves form the foundations for our understanding of the value and the limitations of our work in seeking to challenge the structures which sustain underdevelopment.

Since its emergence after the Second World War, OXFAM has undergone a gradual transition from an agency concerned with charity-relief work to one whose main concern is development. This transition has been reflected in OXFAM-Canada since its founding in 1965. While in 1966 almost all disbursements were made for charity-relief work to provide food and immediate support for the most seriously affected victims of poverty in the Third World, by 1970 only 36% of our funds were allocated for these purposes. (This still represents a significant allocation of funds since our income had increased 6 fold in the same period.) Our major allocations by this time were for long-term development projects with one or more agricultural, education, family planning, health and nutrition components. As such, this change in approach from treating the symptoms of poverty to a conscious attempt to alter the conditions which produce malnutrition, hunger and disease in the Third World broadened our awareness of the social and political implications of all aspects of our work. Thus while we continued to provide short-term relief support in response to situations of immediate disasters and emergencies, we have made an attempt to allocate this relief in a manner that increases the potential for long-term development.

Our Policy Paper on International Development in 1972 challenges the more traditional understanding of this term 'development' and poses an alternative conception.

...development amounts to a great deal more than increases in gross domestic product, per capita incomes,

per capita railway mileage, etc. and development cannot be left solely in the hands of the economists. The overall aim of development is to bring into being a society in which the available resources are shared by the people on an equitable basis. There are two weaknesses in this definition. Firstly, it is not clear who is to be responsible for bringing about these changes in the society and on this matter there should be no doubt. Secondly, to the materialistically minded westerner, the term 'resource' too often suggests only a material and static thing, whereas the term encompasses people in all their variety and especially their culture.

In the projects we support OXFAM-Canada has worked with the poorest sections of the population in both rural and urban areas in their efforts to realize their aspirations for social justice and greater equality within their own societies. The notion of social justice must be tempered with the recognition that one of the central causes of underdevelopment is the existence of indigenous and external elites who use their economic and political power to impose 'development priorities' which strengthen their own positions within a developing society. In other words, the poorest sections, at the socio-economic margin, who daily face the conditions of material poverty, also lack the political power to realize their interests in a more just and equitable social order. It is for this reason that OXFAM seeks to support indigenously determined self-help projects that on a long-term basis confront the most immediate conditions of poverty amongst the marginalized and exploited population. By creating the conditions for relative self-reliance, such

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projects may also develop the self-confidence and awareness of the oppressed to assert their longer-term interests in the national political, economic and social spheres. Along with this understanding comes the realization that any nation-wide amelioration of the conditions of poverty requires a thorough-going change in social and economic structures that sustain dependency and exploitation. Development projects do not in themselves generate such structural transformations. What they can do is create the awareness of their necessity and offer a model for real alternatives. We shall show later that this perspective is directly relevant to our involvement in the Mackenzie Valley. First however we would like to establish its meaning for our work in the Third World.

Our experience in Bangladesh and India, long an area of concentration for OXFAM, reflects both the importance and the limitations of long-term development projects. Since its initial involvement in relief and rehabilitation following the formation of Bangladesh, OXFAM has worked closely with the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. They have developed programmes to promote functional literacy, provide seeds and agricultural implements, assist the formation of co-operative societies and establish field camps to provide medical services. Important as these programmes are for those deriving real benefit from them, we have become increasingly aware of the exploitative and corrupt political context within which they operate. While smuggling of the major export crop, jute, occurs on a massive scale, commodity prices in general rose by 400% in 1974 and rice (a basic staple) by 240%. Nearly half the rural population are landless or own small uneconomic plots. Unable to maintain a subsistence level of income, the poorer peasant is bound to the wealthy peasant and moneylender through increasing debt

in order to purchase the grain he is unable to grow. This sector of the rural population is the first to be affected by any threat of drought or famine because they are unable to afford the food available on the market. At the same time, the control of land, agricultural labour and rural credit by the elite within Bangladesh imposes social, economic and political obstacles for a programme to redistribute land on a co-operative basis. Without redistribution of land the landless and poor can have no secure and independent economic base to sustain them. With control over land and power resting in the hands of others the real needs of those most oppressed --- for adequate shelter, nutrition, health and education --- can never be met.

In India we were confronted by similar, if not more complex, socio-economic and political circumstances. Here our support for FREA (Front for Rapid Economic Advancement of India) involves OXFAM in a number of programmes of social and economic change. These emphasize the development of local leadership, aim to foster a sense of social consciousness, and evolve a framework within which the participants can come to understand their immediate circumstances. In one community, they have organized a co-operative consumer shop which forced down village prices by 20% and broke the image of the village notable as an 'all powerful man'. In another community, where landlords controlled all the land and exploited poor farmers and landless labourers, the latter were organized to demand redistribution of government land. Successfully obtaining plots, they have cleared their land, collectively irrigated it and established a co-operative marketing scheme. At the same time, FREA realistically points out in their reports that these projects are strongly resisted by village landlords who feel threatened by the relative economic self-sufficiency

achieved by those involved. They note that the landlords "fear that through providing regular employment to people, (these projects) would reduce the pressure on land and would cause a demand for higher wages --- making the landless independent of the landlords to a certain extent". This experience then has compelled OXFAM-Canada to note the complexities of exploitative and dependent relationships between social groups which often are the underlying foundation for the extremities of poverty and affluence in many Third World nations.

Our support for those seeking national self-determination and social justice in Southern Africa, in the context of former Portuguese colonial regimes and continued racial oppression in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa, has focused our attention upon the brutal realities of externally-oriented 'development' priorities that sustain dependency and exploitation at a national level. The organization of Mozambique's economy as a consequence of 400 years of Portuguese colonialism was characterized by the plantation production of export crops and the forced cultivation of coffee by African peasants. During the 1960's, this externally oriented development involved the construction of a huge hydro-electric project at Cabora Bassa utilizing South African and British capital to serve the power needs of South Africa and mineral exploitation in Mozambique. Such 'development', suiting the needs and interests of metropolitan industrial economies, meant for Africans a brutal system of 'contract' labour that compelled them to work at less than subsistence wages on private estates and Portuguese projects. The European monopoly of the commercial agricultural sector and the forced cultivation of export crops for minimal returns reduced the vast majority of African peasants to a bare sub-

sistence level.

The long struggle waged by FRELIMO against the Portuguese regime has succeeded in creating an independent and free Mozambique. The roots of that struggle amongst the masses of rural peasants has meant for Mozambique the elaboration of development priorities that serve the real needs of the vast majority of the population. OXFAM-Canada offered assistance to FRELIMO for the development of their economy in the liberated zones during the war against the Portuguese. Now as the government of Mozambique, FRELIMO sustains these development priorities by emphasizing the importance of primary education directly related to the movement's experience in creating a free Mozambique and to the practical needs of rural agricultural development on a co-operative basis. This contrasts Portuguese colonial education which was oriented towards integrating the African into a Portuguese determined 'civilization'. In encouraging co-operative agricultural development at the village level, FRELIMO has also emphasized the production of food crops for the subsistence of the village as a whole as well as these and commercial crops for exchange for necessary agricultural implements, seeds, textiles, etc. In her report to OXFAM in 1973, Janet Mondlane of the Mozambique Institute noted that "the development of production and commerce in Mozambique is essential to the successful growth of a new society ... oriented by our determination to free our country from exploitation, both internal and external". (Based in Tanzania, the Mozambique Institute organized and supported the development of agricultural production, health and education in the liberated zones of Mozambique during the war with the Portuguese.)

But Portuguese colonialism has left a legacy. The promotion of migrant labour for South African mines and the development

of a capital intensive hydro-electric project, though inappropriate to the most immediate needs of the Mozambican people, continues to influence the course of Mozambican development today. OXFAM-Canada has renewed its commitment, both in Mozambique and now Angola, to support the continued struggle to challenge the patterns of exploitative and externally imposed development. We hope in this way to assist in the transformation of Mozambique by its people from a dependent colonial country, its people exploited by both national and international interests, to a truly independent nation utilizing its own resources in a context of self-reliance and self-determination. This change represents a real challenge and alternative to the massive poverty and inequality that Mozambicans have known for several hundred years.

The transformation in the nature and the understanding of our work overseas has also been reflected in the development of our programme in Canada. This programme increasingly has come to recognize the importance of education and political action work. Public education programmes have been developed in the three regions of OXFAM-Canada in order to broaden the awareness of Canadians of the dimensions and causes of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy in the Third World. But equally important, the thrust of these programmes have also emphasized the importance of effecting changes in Canadian government policy towards the Third World. Ultimately such policy changes in Canada's economic relations with the developing nations can effect a more significant challenge to the structures that sustain underdevelopment than relief aid or welfare oriented development assistance.

OXFAM's education and political action programmes have generated a response among Canadians not only because of a

humanitarian concern but also because we feel Canadians share a common ground with those seeking social justice in the Third World. Just as powerful external economic elites have distorted development in the Third World, these same elites in the industrial nations have distorted their own economies, most prominently through the agencies of global corporations supported by large governments. As a resource hinterland for metropolitan industrial nations, this distortion has also occurred in Canada. The most obvious victims of this process of development have been Canada's native people as well as the urban and rural poor. Their situation is characterized by those same conditions of under-development that we have experienced in the Third World. And it is for this reason that material and other support for these groups are consistent with OXFAM's aims and objectives.

OXFAM-Canada's involvement with Canadian native people goes back to 1970, the year in which we funded Project Talking Bird. OXFAM paid for the purchase of a small airplane operated under the direction of the Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples. We also funded some running costs. This plane was used to do initial organization work in both Western and Eastern Arctic communities, especially among the Inuit.

The idea was to put isolated native communities in touch with one another. They would then discover that the concerns they had about how modernization was coming to the North, or what place they would have in the future northern society, were concerns that other communities shared. With this knowledge and communication, native people could begin to assert their right to participate in making decisions which will affect their lives and the lives of their children.

Project Talking Bird was especially useful in helping to build

local affiliates of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (I.T.C.) in the eastern Arctic.

This initial involvement with Canada's native people in 1970 was motivated by a genuine humanitarian response to their plight, by a concern for their physical and psychological oppression. But this concern was sharpened in the years following in the awareness that the causes of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, etc. among native people in Canada were remarkably similar to the causes underlying underdevelopment in the Third World.

Just as the societies and economies of indigenous peoples in the Third World had been disrupted, distorted and weakened during the periods of conquest, colonialism and neo-colonialism by the intervention of the industrial countries seeking resources for their own interest, so too in Canada the appropriation of land resources by companies, governments, and individuals led to the distortion, disruption and eventual destruction of the indigenous economies and societies of Canada's native people. They were pushed aside in the process of nation-building and profit-building, sometimes exterminated, sometimes conquered, more often forced onto reserves and put under the charge of the federal government. The colonisation of the Third World has had its parallel in this country. What is most unsettling however is that this internal colonialism directed at the native people of Canada has not ended, even in the present day.

It is in this context that OXFAM-Canada saw that its experience and policies in encouraging development among communities in the Third World were directly relevant to a similar challenge among Canadian native people. In the past two years and in response to requests from native

organizations, OXFAM has again been able to give practical expression to its long-standing concern for native development in Canada, through financial and other support for native peoples' projects.

In 1974, the National Indian Brotherhood sought OXFAM's help to prepare for an international conference of Aboriginal Peoples. The meeting would bring together Lapps from Scandinavia, Aborigines from Australia, Indians from North and South America, Inuit from the Arctic, Bushmen from Africa etc. It would bring together representatives from all these groups to exchange information and strategies about their common problems as 'small peoples' trying to survive and develop, surrounded by a dominant society of invaders.

In the same year, the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. also approached OXFAM. They were determined to seek a land settlement in the N.W.T. different from all previous native land settlements. They sought a continuing role in both the planning and the benefits of developing their ancient northern homeland. The mechanism for ensuring themselves of a place in the future economic, social, and political life of Canada's North would be continuing ownership of their land. All previous Canadian treaties with native people, up to and including the James Bay Settlement, have been instruments for extinguishing aboriginal rights to the land. The result of this extinguishment was that the dominant non-native Canadian Society pushed ahead with its own kind of 'development' while native people became outcasts and pensioners.

OXFAM-Canada was attracted by several aspects of this proposal put forward by the Dene people. First it was a grass roots movement --- the impetus and demand for this kind of a land

settlement came from the communities. The near universal support for such an approach is shown by the response of hundreds of individuals to this Inquiry when it visits native communities.

Secondly, the Dene have made a significant break-through in uniting the status, non-status and Metis people of the N.W.T. In most parts of Canada 'treaty' Indians keep themselves separated from 'non-status' and Metis people. This division is promoted and encouraged by the policy of our federal government which refuses to deal with these groups as one. In the N.W.T. the Dene made it clear from the start that they sought a settlement for all people of Indian ancestry. So strongly did they make this point that the federal government agreed for the first time in modern Canadian history to negotiate with both groups together.

Thirdly and lastly, OXFAM-Canada was asked to support only those segments of the Indian Brotherhood's work which the Federal government had refused to fund.

In June 1975, OXFAM agreed to a project grant of \$140,000 over a two year period to fund economic studies related to a land claim settlement in the N.W.T. Part of that grant will be used to pay for independent analysis of the economic potential of land under claim.

The largest portion will fund a series of workshops in which the Dene will develop their own concepts of community-based development. By deciding what kind of development they want, they will be able to work out the specific nature of the land settlement that would be needed to make it possible. In this way they will be sure that development alternatives will

be compatible with their own life-style and needs.

It is our understanding that this process, which is a critical process, is now well under way within the Brotherhood. But a process by which people themselves endeavour to take control over their own lives and future is necessarily a time-consuming one. To deny the Dene the time they need is to risk serious damage to their future. The Dene position of "no pipeline before a land settlement" is surely a minimal demand which must be respected.

Consistent with OXFAM-Canada's desire to develop an educational programme around its major projects, we appointed a full time staff member in July 1975 to act as a liaison person between OXFAM and the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. The responsibility of the liaison officer has been to examine the situation in the Mackenzie Valley through direct experience in the field and to translate that understanding into an education programme for southern Canadians in the Province of Ontario. The programme began in October 1975 and continues today.

Our involvement in the Mackenzie Valley since 1974 has given OXFAM-Canada the opportunity to analyse the dynamics of development in the region and to articulate, with the benefit of our experience elsewhere, what conditions are essential if social equality and justice are to be guaranteed to the Dene of the North. An independent economic base suited to the present capacities of the native people of the Mackenzie Valley and sufficient to provide for both their present and their future development is one condition that is absolutely necessary. The second is a measure of self-determination that will allow the Dene to determine their own development priorities and that will at the same time secure their direct

participation in other development decisions within the region.

Land and self-determination have existed for the Dene through most of their history and even in large measure in the present day. They continue to have a land base and the control they have had de facto over this land has allowed them to maintain their economy and the society which is built on it. Government policy and corporate activity has often weakened the integrity of their way of life, but the fact that this externally initiated development has been in the past sporadic rather than comprehensive, has given the Dene the space to keep their society together and to avoid the symptoms of social disintegration that have been the fate of native people in southern Canada. Granted industrial training and employment programmes and government education systems, the Dene have been marginalized from the development process in the Mackenzie Valley. It has been their fortune that thus far this process has not engulfed the north, that industry and government have ignored this last frontier sufficiently to leave a margin enough for the Dene to sustain themselves on their own resources.

The future holds a different prospect however, for the conquest of the last frontier has begun. Development of northern energy reserves and exploitation of northern mineral resources threatens to erode the margin that has underwritten the Dene's survival up to now. That erosion comes in the form of direct destruction of their economic base as the wildlife, the fish, the terrain, the air, in short, the renewable resources on which they depend suffer under the environmental damage of development projects. But it also comes (and perhaps more significantly) in the form of social impacts as diverse as alcoholism, prostitution, and short-term employment that draws people away from the land and away from their

communities only to throw them back there when employment opportunities dry up.

Government policy as it relates to northern native people gives no basis for hope that this process will be reversed. The mandate of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs --- to extinguish the Dene's aboriginal title in exchange for reserves and monetary compensation --- does not offer an economic base capable of supporting Dene society. The protected lands will be too small, usufructory rights on unprotected lands will lose their value as 'development' decimates renewable resources, and monetary compensation, insufficient to begin with, will not come within an integrated development plan worked out by the Dene necessary to maximise its usefulness. Moreover the chronic failure of government programmes directed at assimilating native people within the dominant, non-native society, closes off what might be an alternative source for the satisfaction of the material, if not the social and cultural needs, of the Dene. The future of the Dene under a land settlement as it is being advanced by the federal government will be little different from what is now the present-day reality for most native people in southern Canada --- unproductive reserves, emigration to the metropolitan centres; in both places welfare, alcoholism, violence, suicide, demoralization. The injustice of this situation is inescapable. The need for an alternative is clear.

A land settlement that recognizes the aboriginal title of the Dene to their traditional lands and that invests them with the power to chart their own course for the future is an alternative, consistent with the goals of social equality and justice that form the foundation of OXFAM-Canada's work. This demand by the Dene to control their own lives and to chart their own future course constitutes the essence of the Dene

Declaration, we believe, and the reason why OXFAM-Canada strongly supports it. The land will provide the material base, and the self-determination will provide the institutional foundation for the Dene to meet their development needs. Without the latter, power over the lives of the Dene will continue to rest in the hands of Canadian governments which have consistently shown themselves --- whether through ignorance or insensitivity --- to be incapable of wielding power beneficially. Political rights that give the Dene control over development on an on-going basis in the Mackenzie Valley must be fundamental to any just land settlement. Without ownership of the land and of the rights to its renewable and non-renewable resources, the self-determination of the Dene will lack an economic base and will be vacuous. Both land and self-determination are important; both are necessary.

The alternatives are clear. This is not a debate about legalities, but about social justice. The history of colonialism and exploitation, whose consequences are so evident in the Third World, and regrettably are also evident in the treatment of native people in Canada, must not be repeated in the Mackenzie Valley. For what this Inquiry is considering is not only the right to cultural survival of the Dene, but their material and social survival as well. As basic human rights, these must be guaranteed to them.

APPENDIX A

WITNESS RESUMES

APPENDIX B

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